

ALTOONA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY – JANUARY 11, 2021 - 6:00 P.M.
CITY OF ALTOONA TRAINING FACILITY & COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1320 WASHINGTON AVENUE, ALTOONA, PA

CALL TO ORDER – by Mayor Pacifico at 6:00 PM

SILENT MEDITATION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL – taken by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer

Present: Council members Butterbaugh, Cacciotti, Carper, Ickes, Kelley and Mayor Pacifico

Absent: Councilwoman Jordan

PRESENTATIONS – Recognition of PA National Guard Command Sgt. Major Harry “Jim” Buchanan III (Retired) – Councilman Ickes highlighted CSM Buchanan’s career and provided him with a plaque with the Key to the City (railroad spike); Mayor Pacifico presented CSM Buchanan with a proclamation.

CSM Buchanan thanked the City for the recognition and for all that the City does for the citizens stating he loves the City and he and his wife raised two kids in Altoona, worked for McAleer’s Plumbing for 40 years and would like to continue to live in Altoona and to find a way to serve the City of Altoona. CSM Buchanan stated that without supporting staff he would have never been a leader.

Mayor Pacifico announced his appointment recommendations for authorities, boards and commissions which are listed in resolutions c through q below

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT (via telephone) – Mayor Pacifico called for public comment. The call-in number is included on the agenda and on the City’s website calendar approximately one week prior to the meeting. The number is also displayed on Public Access Channel 14 during the meeting for television viewers.

Patrick Miller, 209 N 6th Avenue, President of the IAFF Local 299, stated the following: on June 20th it was announced that Blair County would receive \$11 million in COVID CARES Act funds; with COVID-19 impacting families and businesses in the City of Altoona it was presented that the City of Altoona would have up to a \$500,000 loss of tax revenue due to COVID-19 shutdowns, according to City Manager Decker in the September 9, 2020 Altoona Mirror news article; in the same article City Manager Decker stated he planned to recommend to City Council that the City not apply for any of the \$11 million dollars of the CARES Act funding, indicating the City only had \$50,000 of COVID costs thus far and the County application process appeared complicated, although whomever prepared Blair’s application took a page out of the federal government; one of the County Commissioners stated in that article that the application process was actually not complicated and that it was much like the applications used by other

counties; on December 10, 2020 the *Altoona Mirror* ran an article entitled, *Blair Allocates CARES Funds*, and this article gave a list of eight local governments or agencies who would collect as much as \$2.3 million to offset their COVID-19 expenditures and the top three were AMED \$1.5 million, Logan Township \$622,280, and Greenfield Township \$73,604; Mr. Miller stated when reading the article he was baffled that the City of Altoona did not apply for any of the CARES Act funding, as the City is the largest local government in Blair County with the most employees; Mr. Miller stated he printed out a copy of the grant applications and the guidelines which consisted of four pages; Mr. Miller stated he filed a right to know request on December 17, 2020 with Blair County requesting the following information: a breakdown of Logan Township's \$622,000 grant and a copy of Logan Township's grant application; the request was received on January 7, 2021; Mr. Miller reviewed each entry on Logan Township's grant application with Mayor Pacifico and Council; Mr. Miller stated municipalities from across the country utilized CARES Act funds for frontline workers wages and other PPE and equipment and Mr. Miller cited several municipalities and the funds received for operating budget shortfalls, police payroll, operating costs and overtime, new fire apparatus, fire and ambulance service payroll, salaries for police and firefighters who are essential workers; Mr. Miller stated he believes the City of Altoona missed the boat on possibly obtaining over \$1 million dollars of CARES Act money; Mr. Miller stated the City is projecting a shortfall of \$500,000 and is in the final year of an ACT 47 generated contract which means all three of the City's bargaining units are up for negotiations; Mr. Miller stated when they sit down at the negotiation table in honest negotiations this is put on the backs of the workers who serve the City day in and day out to make up for shortfalls through possible staffing cuts, pay freezes and restructuring and other alternatives; Mr. Miller stated the City residents and employees of the City of Altoona want a more detailed answer of why the City did not apply for the CARES money to support the workers of the City of Altoona.

RESOLUTIONS

- a) approving the minutes of the Altoona City Council Meeting held Monday, December 2, 2020. (0001-21)
- b) approving the designation of technical officers, inspectors and other employees of the Altoona Fire Department, by Fire Chief Tim Hileman, as set forth herein, for the purpose of enforcing compliance with the International Fire Code 2015 Edition, adopted and Codified as Chapter 358 of the City of Altoona Code of Ordinances, and acknowledging the establishment of policies and procedures regarding enforcement of same. (0002-21)
- c) re-appointing Barbara Kooman to the Altoona Water Authority for a term of five years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2026. (0003-21)

- d) re-appointing Christopher Kirwin to the Altoona Housing Authority for a term of five years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2026. (0004-21)
- e) appointing Collin Reinhart to the Altoona Parking Authority to fill the unexpired term of Bruce Johnstone. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2025. (0005-21)
- f) re-appointing David Albright to the Altoona City Planning Commission for a term of four years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2025. (0006-21)
- g) re-appointing Chuck Meyers to the Altoona City Planning Commission for a term of four years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2025. (0007-21)
- h) appointing Larry Bilotto to the Altoona City Planning Commission to fill the unexpired term of Jennifer Mikolajczyk. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2023. (0008-21)
- i) re-appointing Richard Fiore Jr. to the Altoona Redevelopment Authority for a term of five years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2026. (0009-21)
- j) re-appointing UPMC Altoona Representative, Monica Klatt, to the AMED Authority for a term of five years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2026. (0010-21)
- k) re-appointing Scott Cessna to the AMTRAN Authority for a term of five years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2026. (0011-21)
- l) re-appointing Larry Field to the Code Appeals Board for a term of five years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2026. (0012-21)
- m) appointing James Potopa to the Code Appeals Board for a term of three years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2024. (0013-21)
- n) re-appointing Donald Belsey to the Civil Service Board for a term of four years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2025. (0014-21)
- o) re-appointing Ted Beam (alternate) to the Civil Service Board for a term of four years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2025. (0015-21)
- p) appointing Joe Eckels to the Electrical & Plumbing Examiners Board for a term of four years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January 2025. (0016-21)

q) re-appointing Horace McAnuff to the Zoning Hearing Board for a term of five years. Said term shall expire the first Monday of January, 2026. (0017-21)

City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer read the resolutions into the record; Councilman Ickes asked to have item i pulled for a separate vote; item i was read by the City Clerk and the vote was taken and passed 5 to 0; Councilman Ickes abstained (abstention statement attached to the resolution); Councilwoman Jordan was absent; the consent vote was taken by the City Clerk on all items excluding item i and passed 6 to 0; Councilwoman Jordan was absent

CITY MANAGER UPDATES – The City first responders are expected to get their first COVID vaccines in the month of January; Finance is closing out 2020; there has been an increase in property related complaints; the City is managing the Transportation Center and there is nothing to report on the grant applications at this time; scam phone calls are happening in Altoona according to Chief Freehling; the Puritan Silk Mill project exterior renovations are on schedule to be completed on time; there will be a full worksession in January to include discussion with contractors and stakeholders

MAYOR & COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS – Councilman Kelley stated Council heard from the President of the City Firefighters Union and questions have been raised and discussion should be held and Councilman Kelley thanked Patrick Miller for doing his job as President of the Firefighters Union; Councilman Kelley stated there is supposed to be an announcement soon regarding President-elect Biden's stimulus package and it is suspected there will be monies for states and municipalities; looking back at the CARES Act funding and when Council discussed it previously, the real priority was to make sure that AMED received money and the Central Blair Recreation Commission received money, as both were hit really hard and both really affect the City; AMED applied for \$2.5 million and received \$1.5 million; Councilman Kelley asked the City Manager what the criteria was for the CARES Act funding; City Manager Ken Decker stated that the Act, which was adopted on March 27 2020, allowed entities to apply for reimbursement of expenses directly related to COVID-19; the City received numerous calls from the City's advocate organizations like the PA Municipal League and the National League of Cities and they re-emphasized that this was not about aid to state and local governments and it was about aid to businesses and individuals who were impacted by COVID; Mr. Decker stated when looking at the criteria, the City had a very small amount of direct expenses related to COVID and the City was able to identify grant funding sources through PEMA and FEMA to cover the approximate \$60,000 spent by the City; Mr. Decker stated that when reading the grant application guidelines, he did not think the City was eligible; one of the criteria was it had to be money that was not budgeted for in the budget most recently adopted before March 27, 2020; Mr. Decker stated you had to show that you were spending money that was not a part of your adopted budget, and the City came in under budget at the end of the year for 2020 and the City did not spend more money than the City budgeted for; Councilman Kelley

asked what the City's expenditures were for COVID for 2020; Mr. Decker stated approximately \$60,000; Councilman Ickes asked if the guidance came from the United States Treasury; Mr. Decker stated that it did; Mayor Pacifico stated that was part of the discussion last summer between the PA Municipal League and the National League of Cities and their boards in lobbying Congress to change the restrictions that were put on the CARES funds; Mayor Pacifico stated the CARES Act funds were never intended to be used to replace lost revenues; Senator Toomey was not in favor of new money but he was in favor of relaxing the restrictions that would have allowed the CARES funds that were already available to be used in ways that would help municipalities to replace lost revenues; Mayor Pacifico stated the restrictions were never removed and the CARES money stayed unchanged; Mayor Pacifico hopes the next funding round will be directed specifically to municipalities because the Commonwealth distributed the money to the counties to distribute accordingly as this was easier since there are only 67 counties as opposed to 2560 municipalities; Mayor Pacifico stated the money was controlled by the Blair County as to how much was distributed; Blair County received \$11 million and initially they allocated \$800,000 to local governments and when you have 20 plus municipalities plus all of the subsidiary entities such as AMED and Central Blair Recreation Commission, that it is not a lot of money to go around; Councilman Kelley stated that Central Blair Recreation Commission received a lot less than they requested; Mr. Decker stated they received about \$20,000 and they had a much greater loss in revenue; Mayor Pacifico is hoping that if there is another round of funding that it would be nice if they would use a CDBG type formula to determine distribution; Mr. Decker stated if you get one time money and you pay salaries and that one time money runs out, you are where Altoona is often, which is not having enough money to pay the bills; Mayor Pacifico stated Blair County controlled the money and there were no discussions, and the City was not included; Mayor Pacifico stated there should have been more conversations with local governments involved; Councilman Kelley stated if the City's COVID related expenses, as the largest municipality in Blair County were only \$60,000, how can smaller municipalities have higher expenses; Councilman Kelley stated there will most likely be auditing of these funds at some point and if the grant money was received and not needed that it will have to be paid back; Vice-Mayor Butterbaugh stated the City departments were budgeted for the coverage of police and fire and that was one of the criteria already mentioned; Vice-Mayor Butterbaugh stated there was a collaborative effort and research done and the City realized AMED could be in real trouble, and as a vital part of the first responders in our City, had they not been supported, they could have gone under, which would have been a tremendous impact on our community; Vice-Mayor Butterbaugh stated the City employees are doing a great job during COVID and they have handled it well and they should be commended; the public's health and safety is the most importance thing and AMED should be thanked for continuing to operate and for doing the great job that they do

MEDIA – media attendance included Bill Kibler, *Altoona Mirror* who asked questions of Mayor Pacifico and City Council Members.

ADJOURNMENT – by Mayor Pacifico at 6:46 p.m.